

When God's People Suffer: God's Answer in Suffering

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[0 : 00] to follow well in your Bibles this morning. We're going through a few chapters and looking at lots of verses together. Job chapter 38.

Is there a page number there, Xavier? No? That's alright. Sorry? 538 if you're using the church Bible.

538 if you're using the church Bible.

Go through these together. Thanks, Ryan.

Okay, let's pray. Thank you. Our Father God, our desire this morning is that we would encounter you, the true living and awesome God.

[1 : 46] therefore we ask that you in your generosity would pour out and give to us your Holy Spirit so that we may meet this mighty God afresh that we would see him that we would hear him and we pray that not one person in this room would leave without encountering you afresh that each one of us as we meet with you would be changed and transformed that the God that you are would become greater in our minds and we would see ourselves as who we are so please help us that we would encounter you through your word this morning in Jesus name

Amen well Job's journey has been long and painful an innocent man who loves God and hates evil has endured unbearable suffering not only has he lost his health he has witnessed the tragic death of all of his children and watched the destruction of all his wealth and business naturally Job has questions and like us we too would have questions why has God allowed this why does God not intervene Job is desperate for answers and longs to put God on trial as he says in Job chapter 13 I desire to speak to the Almighty and to argue my case with God I would find out what he would answer me and consider what he would say well after 36 chapters of intense grieving anger and frustration

God gives his answer to Job but in dramatic fashion the tables get turned rather than God answering questions we find ourselves answering questions I'm just going to stop there sorry could you maybe just adjust it's quite echoey at the minute can you just slightly adjust that I'll keep talking and yeah that'll be good thank you so if we were the author of Job God would finally make his way into the dock if we wrote this book the way we would have it is that God would go into the dock we would ask God our questions and God would respond to them one by one he would not leave until he gave us the answer that we wanted but that's not what happens look at chapter 38 verse 1 then the Lord answered Job out of the storm he said who is this who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge brace yourself like a man

I will question you and you shall answer me so instead of answers from God what we get are questions from God in fact rather than an explanation we get an encounter you see God's questions are not designed to place blame or to find fault no God's questions are designed to take our focus off our suffering and onto God's sovereignty to take our focus off our suffering and onto God's sovereignty so the answer to our suffering is not an intellectual explanation but an experiential encounter and that's what we get in these chapters 38 to 42 we get to meet the living and the awesome God up close and personal the God that we have been questioning for so long now begins to question us first we encounter

God who controls the universe look at verse 4 he says look at the earth and this is all God speaking to us where were you when I laid the earth's foundations tell me if you understand when there was nothing and then there was something where were you verse 5 who marked off its dimensions surely you know who stretched a measuring line across it who said who said that the earth should be this big should be placed at this angle and be placed at this point in the universe was it you verse 6 on what on what were its footings set or who laid its corner stone when the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy where were you when I spoke and brought all this into existence yet you question if I am in control or look at the seas verse 8 who shut up the sea behind the doors when it burst forth from the womb 11 when I said this far you shall come and no farther here is where your proud waves halt can you alter the tides and control where the seas flow can you verse 16 have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or walked to the recesses of the deep you know the deepest part of the ocean is almost 11 kilometres that's over a mile higher than

[8 : 21] Everest have you been there have you been to the bottom no one knows what exists down there but yet God does verse 18 have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth tell me if you know all of this do you know how it all works do you know how this world happens the way that it does then why do you question me as if I don't understand this world and the suffering that goes on in it or consider the weather he says verse 22 have you entered the storehouses of the snow or seen the storehouses of hail which I reserve for times of trouble for days of war and battle do you do you put the snow there do you say when it falls and how much should fall do you verse 24 what is the way to the place where the lightning is dispersed or the place where the east winds are scattered over the earth who is it that cuts a channel for the torrents of rain and a path for the thunderstorm to water a land where no man lives a desert with no one in it to satisfy a desolate wasteland to make it sprout with grass do you command the weather systems do you verse 28 does the rain have a father who is it that fathers the drops of dew from whose womb comes the ice who gives birth to the frost from the heavens when the waters become as hard as stone like hail when the surface of the deep is frozen do you decide what falls from the sky whether it's snow hail rain or lightning is it you who decides whether the morning it's going to be frost or whether it's going to be dew so why do you question my control over your life or look at the planets verse 31 can you bind the beautiful ladies can you loose the cords of

Orion can you bring forth the constellations in their seasons or lead out the bear with its cubs that's the planets and the stars this is talking about our galaxy where we live which is called the Milky Way you know our galaxy that we live in is so big that it would take you 100,000 light years to travel from one side to the other that means you'd have to be traveling at 186,000 miles a second for over 100,000 years just to get from one side to the other and our galaxy is only one galaxy of hundreds of galaxies that we know to exist verse 33 do you know the laws of the heavens can you set up

God's dominion over the earth can you right now suspend all these planets in space and keep them there but yet you presume to know better than me and you think that you can run a world better than me or look at the animals all around us chapter 39 verse 1 do you do you know when the mountain goats give birth do you do you watch when the doe bears her form do you count the months off till they give birth do you know the time when they give birth I know it all says God I see every living creature give birth to their young whether it's high up in the Andes mountains or on the plains of the Surighetti

I know it all do you verse 9 what about the wild animals will the wild ox consent to serve you verse 12 can you trust him to bring in your grain and to gather it to your threshing floor do wild animals listen to you when you speak to them do they do what you say you can't even control your dogs your pets yet the animals listen to me and they do what I say or look at the ostrich in verse 13 the wings of the ostrich flap joyfully but they don't compare with the pinions those beautiful feathers of the stork in other words the ostrich is ugly with its bald head and its bristly neck but not only are they ugly they're downright stupid verse 14 she lays her eggs on the ground and lets them warm in the sand unmindful that a foot may crush them that some wild animal may trample on them ugly and stupid why verse 17 because God did not endow her with wisdom or give her a share of good sense or good looks yet when she spreads her feathers to run she laughs at horse and rider an ostrich can run at 72 kilometers an hour faster than a purebred racehorse could you design something so ugly and so stupid but yet so amazingly brilliant

God does but you doubt his wisdom over your life or look at verse 26 does the hawk take flight by your wisdom and spread his wings towards the south the hawk travels from the rockies in Canada south to the lowlands of Argentina thousands of miles apart they go to the same nest as either place every year do you design the migration of the birds their tiny little heads do you do you figure all that out verse 27 does the eagle soar at your command and build his nest on high he dwells on a cliff and he stays there at night a rocky crag is his stronghold from there he seeks out his food his eyes detect it from afar an eagle can spot its prey from a thousand metres up a kilometre up in the air he can see a tiny little mouse and he dives and he darts and he makes its kill can you control what I control says God this is the awesome mighty powerful

[16 : 00] God who created the universe and controls the universe in which we live the earth the weather the planets the animals God controls it all he made it all how are we to respond to such an awesome God chapter 40 verse 1 then the Lord the Lord said to Job will the one who contends with the almighty correct him are you going to tell God what to do with his world let him who accuses God answer him our questions about God's incompetence to run this world with all its suffering our presumption that we know better than God how to run the world is like a little three year old telling a pilot of a jumbo jet that he doesn't know how to fly could you imagine a little kid getting on the plane and saying you don't know what you're doing would you hand the controls of a plane like that into the hands of a toddler and sit quietly and patiently in your seat as he tried to land that plane would you of course you wouldn't he knows absolutely nothing about the plane and we know nothing about the universe that

God has created so in humility we trust God who controls our world and he controls our life verse three then Job answered the Lord I am unworthy how can I reply to you I put my hand over my mouth I spoke once but I have no answer twice but I will say no more God is the designer the creator the sustainer of the universe in which we live and with all of these questions that we are being bombarded at God is saying I am in control over every detail over every event over every day over every single second of your life

I am in charge so will you not trust me with your suffering will you trust me well second we encounter God who not only controls the universe we encounter God who rules over all evil look at chapter 40 verse 6 the Lord spoke to Job out of the storm a second time brace yourself like a man I will question you and you shall answer me the questions just keep on coming but the issue here is not God's control over creation but God's rule over evil and in the next two chapters we are introduced to two very strange creatures which

I think symbolize the ruthless and destructive power of evil the first one we are introduced to is in verse 15 of chapter 40 he's called the behemoth he's described for us verse 15 look at the behemoth which I made along with you and which feeds on grass like an ox what strength he has in his loins what power in the muscles of his belly his tail sways like a cedar his sinews of his thighs are close knit his bones are tubes of bronze his limbs are rods of iron some people say it's an elephant or a hippopotamus but whatever it is it is very strong and very powerful the second creature we're introduced to is in chapter 41 verse 1 it's called the leviathan again this creature is described in verse 15 chapter 41 his back has rows of shields tightly sealed together each is so close to the next that no air can pass between they are joined fast to one another they cling together and cannot be parted what is this creature verse 22 strength resides in his neck dismay goes before him the folds of his flesh are tightly joined they are firm and immovable his chest is hard as rock hard as a lower millstone when he rises up the mighty are terrified they retreat before his thrashing some say it's a description of a crocodile with its scaly back but again whatever this creature is it is fierce and it brings terrible fear we come across this creature in other parts of the

Bible no need to look it up but in Isaiah 27 verse 1 there it's talking about God coming to rescue to redeem and to restore but he must first defeat the creature his enemy and it says this in that day the Lord will punish with his sword his fierce great and powerful sword Leviathan that's the creature the gliding serpent Leviathan the coiling serpent he will slay the monster of the sea you see in Isaiah it's easier to see that this creature is an enemy of God or as the New Testament refers to him as the great dragon that ancient serpent the devil or Satan so I think these strong fierce creatures are a picture of the evil that we see at work in our world that causes so much suffering so much destruction and so much death now the question is what can you and

[23 : 20] I do about this evil what can we do about Satan have we got the power within ourselves to destroy him and defeat him well this strong powerful creature chapter 40 verse 24 can anyone capture him by the eyes or trap him and pierce his nose God's asking us questions again are you strong enough to fight against God's enemy are you verse 1 chapter 41 can you pull in the leviathan with a fish hook or tie down his tongue with a rope do you think you have the power over Satan like you pull in a mackerel from the sea can you do that verse 5 can you make this creature a pet of him like you do to a bird or can you put a leash on him and bring him home to your children and say look what

I brought home do you have the strength to control this terrifying creature do you think you have the weapons of knowledge and wisdom to tame this monster can you really overpower the devil well look what happens if we try verse 8 if you lay a hand on him you will remember the struggle and you will never do it again any hope of subduing him is false the mere sight of him is overpowering no one is fierce enough to rouse him we are powerless over evil but let me remind you says God I am more powerful still look at the rest of verse 10 who who then is able to stand against me who has a claim against me that I must pay who is it that I have to answer to everything under heaven belongs to me me you you can't even begin to fight

Satan and his ways but never forget this he belongs to me says God and he can do nothing in this world without my permission or my say so nothing well when this fierce creature does unleash his destruction chapter 41 verse 25 when he rises up the mighty are terrified they retreat before his thrashing the sword that reaches him has no effect nor does the spear or the dart or the javelin no matter what you try you cannot beat him iron verse 27 he treats like straw and bronze like rotten wood arrows do not make him flee sling stones are like chaff to him a club seems to him but a piece of straw he laughs at the rattling of the lance do you really think that you can come up with some defence mechanism against evil do you think that you can stop all the suffering in this world can you

Satan laughs at our pathetic attempts verse 33 nothing on earth is his we equal a creature without fear he looks down on all that are haughty he is king over all that are proud Satan is real suffering is real he is destructive and there is nothing that you or I can do about it but listen to this says God I can look closely at what verse 33 says he says nothing on earth is his equal a creature without fear that's what he is a creature he has been made God is saying he's a creature I control him I rule over him you can't tackle the problem of evil but I can some years ago

I went overseas on a team and the place that we were staying was full of nasty vicious dogs and on one occasion as I was coming back to the house where I was staying all of a sudden this dog started running towards me it was this huge big Alsatian I've never they breed monster dogs there it was huge snarling teeth snapping dribbles flying everywhere it ran at me and I stood there paralysed in fear as this Alsatian came running towards me and about six feet away it just lunged straight at me and then no sooner as he lunged then he fell on the ground what I didn't know he was on a chain and there was at a point at which he could not cross and that's the picture that we have here

[29 : 22] Satan is a creature he belongs to God he is fierce he barks and he snaps but he is under God's rule it's like he is on a leash he is on a chain he does not have free reign in this world as one writer put it Satan cannot go one millimetre beyond what God permits or allows not one he is a creature he belongs to me this is the awesome power of God who rules over all evil and how are we to respond chapter 42 verse 1 then Job replied to the Lord I know that you can do all things no plan of yours can be thwarted verse 4 you said to me listen now and I will speak

I will question you and you shall answer me well my ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you I have come to encounter the living true and awesome God therefore verse 6 I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes God rules over all evil God reigns over Satan's plans and yes we may still wonder why God allows it why he created the devil why all of these things or why does God not sometimes shorten the leash but he wants us to see that whatever happens in this world whatever happens in our life he is in charge and he rules over every single thing so rather than fight

God with the questions that we're never going to get answers to he says will you just submit to me repent for failing to trust me the awesome God who rules over all God's answer to all of our questions about suffering and evil is not so much an explanation but an encounter with the living and awesome God God God who controls all creation the God who rules over all evil stands before us and says this is who I am trust me and that's what Job had Job had an encounter with this God and that's what we need in our life just go back to chapter 38 verse 1 this whole speech this whole questioning from God for these four chapters all starts out from this point chapter 38 verse 1 the Lord answered Job out of the storm the word there for storm is the same as hurricane there's a picture of it there or a whirlwind so God is speaking to Job out of a hurricane which is both terrifying and comforting because a hurricane can cause so much damage and destruction but as you know as the picture there shows at the very centre what's called the eye of the storm it is absolutely calm completely still and that gives us a picture

I think of what it is to encounter God like Job when we experience suffering in all the different ways that it comes to us it's like being in a storm in a hurricane it's destruction and damage and chaos and carnage all around us and in our lives but to come to God to encounter God is not to be taken out of the storm it's to be taken into the very centre of the storm where it is absolutely calm do you get it do you follow what he's saying Job is not taken out of the storm he's drawn into the very heart of the storm and when he's at the heart that is where he is safe here is where he meets his God who controls and rules over his life and not to humble ourselves not to submit ourselves to

God is to be left on the outside where the storm is terrifying where there is no hope and where there is no peace well how are we going to encounter this God how do you and I get to the center of the storm where it is safe when we are in the midst of our suffering well we must go to the cross because at the cross we encounter the greatest storm that ever hit this earth here the storm of evil rages as Satan watches over as Jesus the creator of the universe is hung and beaten and crucified on a cross and to those looking on it seems as if

[36 : 02] God is dead that Satan has overcome with all his evil power but yet it's at the eye of this storm at the cross where we are safe on the cross Jesus defeats the plan of Satan on the cross Jesus destroys the power of Satan through his death he destroys him listen to this from Hebrews chapter 2 speaking about his death he says we see Jesus who suffered death he came and he shared our humanity he became like one of us so that by his death listen he might destroy him who holds the power of death that is the devil

Leviathan the monster the creature he destroys him who holds the power of death that is the devil and he frees those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death the suffering of Jesus on the cross sets us free from Satan so that we might belong to Christ and it's only by you and I coming to Jesus coming to the cross coming to the center of the storm to encounter God in all his might in all his power in all his love in all his wonder that we are truly safe in the storm of suffering we must encounter God as we come to the cross in humility and in submission we trust the

God who rules over all creation and rules over all evil let's pray together way o' ou' o' ■■■■ anything bye o' kali o' o' Creator God, ruling God and saving God, we humble ourselves before you.

We submit ourselves to you, the awesome, powerful and mighty God that you are. We are sorry for the times we have questioned and thought that we know better.

But yet we trust you afresh. We encounter you afresh at the cross and see your awesome power and your love.

[39 : 42] And we rest there in the safety of all the sufferings that we may go through. For there you are with us. There you understand.

There you give us hope, joy and peace. We thank you for the awesome God that you are. In Jesus' name.

Amen. We're going to sing a couple of pieces in response to what we've been looking at this morning.

The first one is we declare your majesty. We proclaim that your name is exalted for you reign magnificently. You rule victoriously.

Your power is shown throughout the earth. If you trust God, if you love God, you will want to worship him, submit to him and bow before him as we sing this.

[40 : 48] The next song that we sing after this is In Christ Alone. And in there it talks about the storms that we go through. But I think it's in the last verse it talks about that there's no power.

Not even hell itself can take us out of Christ's grip. We are safe with Christ. For trust is in him.

Let's stand together and worship God. We proclaim that your name is exalted.

For you reign magnificently, rule victoriously, and your power is shown throughout the earth.

And we proclaim our God is mighty. Lift up your name.

[42 : 01] For you are holy. Sing it again. For you reign magnificently, You reign magnificently, rule victoriously, And your power is shown throughout the earth.

And we exclaim, Our God is mighty. Lift up your name.

For you are holy. Sing it again. All honor and glory.

In adoration we bow before your throne. In Christ alone my hope is found.

In Christ alone my hope is found.

[43 : 40] He is my life, He is my strength, My strength, My song. This cornerstone, This solid ground, Burned through the fiercest, What heights of love, What depths of peace, What depths of peace, When fears are still, When strivings free, My comforter, My all in all, Here in the love of Christ, Here in the love of Christ, Here in the love of Christ, God's hand.

In Christ alone, Who took on flesh, Fullness of God, In hell with faith, This gift of love, And righteousness, Scorned by the one who came to save, Till on that cross that Jesus died, The wrath of God, The wrath of God, Was satisfied, For every sin, On Him was laid, Here in the truth of Christ, I live.

The wrath of God, The wrath of God, The wrath of God, Was satisfied, For every sin, On Him was laid, Here in the truth of Christ, I live.

The wrath of God, The wrath of God, And His Son, The wrath of God, The wrath of God, The wrath of God, The wrath of God, And His Son, Where in the ground, His body lay, Light of the will, The darkness slain.

Then bursting forth, In glorious day, Up from the grave He rose, And He rose again, And He stands in victory, His curse has lost its grip on me, For I am His, And He is mine, Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

[46 : 01] No guilt in life, No fear in death, This is the power of Christ in me, From life's first cry, To final breath, Jesus commands my destiny.

No power of hell, No scheme of man, Can ever pluck me from His hand, Till He returns, To return, For calls me home, For calls me home, Here in the power of Christ I stand.

No power of hell, No scheme of man, No scheme of man, Can ever pluck me from His hand, Never touch me from his hand, till he returns or calls me home, here in the fire of Christ of God.

Please do take a seat. As we share in the Lord's Supper together, I want us to see this as, yes, us coming to encounter God, to get to the very centre of that storm, where it is both terrifying and comforting, because it is only meeting Christ on the cross that we are truly safe, where we kind our comfort, our hope, our peace and our joy.

This is how we encounter God. So as we share in this simple meal together, let's remind ourselves of all that we've just sung, all that we've thought about.

[48 : 12] Christ who came, who defeats the power of Satan, destroys his plans. We are safe with him.

And so the eating of that bread, the drinking of that juice, is us humbling ourselves, us submitting afresh, and by faith, by trust, we are saying, this is my God.

I trust him with my life for what he has done for me. So as the bread is being passed around, hold on to it, we're going to eat together in a minute.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[49 : 15] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.